

## Sailing Through the Holidays

Most of us living in West Marin do so because it is a beautiful and less stressful place to live than cities over the hill. However, many of us still get caught up in the fast pace of our 21<sup>st</sup> century lives, especially around holiday time. For a more enjoyable season it makes sense to take advantage of the many natural resources here. When the stress starts to mount and your temper begins to flare, it may be time for a walk in the woods or on the beach—a time out, so to speak. Adults need them, too! Practicing meditation or yoga are ways to stay centered during this very busy time. Even 15 minutes a day can make a difference.

Staying healthy over the holidays is another. All of the above lifestyle changes can help, but eating a well-balanced diet and getting plenty of rest are both key to staying well. If you eat 6-9 servings of vegetables and 2-3 servings of fruit per day along with some lean protein at each meal and several servings of WHOLE grains or legumes you will be doing your body a favor. Then, when you go to a party you can afford to have a few treats. It also helps to stay in control if you have a small protein snack *before* a party so that you do not arrive starving.

Of course, holiday season also means flu season. Sometimes just eating a well balanced diet of high quality foods is not enough this time of year. We may need vitamins and supplements as well. A good multi vitamin/mineral should form the base of your program, then add on from there for your specific needs. The B vitamin complex is called stress complex for a reason. When you are under either physical or emotional stress your body burns through these nutrients at a much faster rate than usual and you need to replenish them if you want to stay well. The same holds true for vitamin C.

One of the more recent theories about why winter is “flu season” is that vitamin D is so much lower in winter, particularly in people living in latitudes north of the 35° parallel, which includes West Marin. Even if it is sunny in northern latitudes, the sun is not strong enough for our bodies to make vitamin D from the sun, so

supplementation is a good idea in winter. The doses can be higher than previously thought, especially if you feel a cold or flu coming on, and it should be the D<sub>3</sub> form (cholecalciferol). You can always be tested for vitamin D, but recent findings have shown that a large number are deficient in this important nutrient. Another nutrient vital for immune support is zinc. It is easy to test for deficiency in the office, and the majority of people are low. The lozenges are especially good for sore throats. There are numerous herbs and other nutrients that help boost the immune system during this challenging time. It is best to work with a health practitioner who is versed in their use.

If you are concerned about taking vitamins without knowing what you may need there are lab tests available that can test not only your vitamin status, but your metabolic function as well. It tests the metabolites excreted in the urine and gives you a biochemical snapshot of what is going on in your body. Then you and your practitioner can plan a diet and targeted supplementation specifically for your needs.

A happy and **healthy** holiday season to all.

*Nutrition Consultant Bonnie Fisk-Hayden, MS practices holistic nutrition in Point Reyes Station and Larkspur. None of the above information is intended to diagnose or treat any illness.*